

Galapogos by Hellbroke

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Summary:

Billy's temper always causes him problems, but luckily he has Max to talk just a bit of sense into him.

1. Galapogos

Author's Note:

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Billy hadn't meant to push you.

It wasn't your fault your ex-boyfriend David had started hiding a liquor flask inside of his varsity jacket because he hated the presence of the new girl who clung to his bicep. It wasn't your fault David the Douche couldn't hold his alcohol and wanted you back. It wasn't your fault that he had chosen the school parking lot to stumble into an already irritated Billy who had just minutes to pick up Max and get home because Mr. Hargrove had already gotten on his case the evening before.

You weren't supposed to be there. Just hours ago in the blue Camaro with a half-eaten sandwich on your lap, you'd told Billy you had plans with your yearbook classmates. Something about a new comedy film down at the theater that everyone's been psyched to see. Billy's never been too good at remembering certain details. Either way, after everything he has been through, Billy should have known that plans never go as planned.

He hadn't meant to push you. Especially not in front of the entire student body.

But, there you had been in your new skirt, now tainted with black stains from the new cement Hawkins had promised with that tax raise, with tears threatening to spill down your doe eyes. The pang in his chest tells him that you'll never wear that skirt again, not without freshening the sting in your scraped palms or the incessant pounding

just beneath your rib cage.

And yet, he couldn't bare to see the familiarity of hate finally poison the only form of comfort and affection he's had since his mother left him or keep up his appearance by finishing the fight your stupid ex-boyfriend had started.

Billy cannot remember the space of time between then and the vibrations through the cool leather under his thighs as the Camaro roared out of there. Out of everyone's accusing eyes—even the piece of shit Tommy H. had nothing to say. And as he sits on his unruly bed with his head in his hands, Billy cannot even tell what's worst: the fact that he ran away with his tail between his legs or the fact that he left behind the only girl he'd ever taken seriously.

The sound of skateboard wheels aggressively running over cracks and bumps in the pavement go through one ear and out the other—there's no room in Billy's loud head for the outside world to settle. Not the creaks from the stubborn doorknob. Not the slamming of the front door nor the stomping of size five Keds as they approach his bedroom.

Everything is dead to him until the thirteen-year-old he barely tolerates stands at his doorway with her hands on her waist and a scowl on her freckled face.

“What?”

Billy's dirty blond locks hang over his face in the fashion of a veil as his hands act like a mask. He hasn't looked up from his position on

the bed nor has his favorite mirror caught a glimpse of his vanity. He's avoiding the very face he was gifted, afraid to finally see the monster that had frightened you.

"Do you have brain damage or something?" Max's voice is too loud compared to the silence that's embraced him for the past ten minutes. "You were supposed to pick me up, and don't dare try to say I was late—"

"Leave me alone." His voice is muffled.

Max's blue eyes scrutinize Billy's pathetic form. His hair's a mess and she can tell he hasn't lifted a single weight since he got home—the faded jean jacket still hangs off his broad shoulders. Her next set of words are far more gentler, yet still carries the same edge: "Did somebody die?"

"No." His shoulders slump just a bit lower. "Go play with your stupid dolls. I don't care."

"Ew, you know I don't touch that shit."

Billy's hands smooth down his warm face, and she sees it. The sensitive skin around his eyes are tinged red. "Go away," he waves her away as he digs for a stray cigarette in his pocket.

His trembling fingers manage to grasp the tip of the cigarette he knew he had hid and shoves it between his lips, suckling on the dry

stick as if he were dying of thirst. And before he even knows it, he's patting himself down for a lighter.

As the trusty lighter remains incognito, the feeling of ants crawling over his taut muscles amplifies. Then he remembers, there's a shitty spare in his bedside drawer under some wrinkled school assignments marked with grades his father wouldn't approve of. But as he shakes, flicking the flint wheel over and over again hoping for just a spark, he remembers he never went down to the liquor store to refill its fluids.

"Fuck!" Max flinches as the cheap plastic crashes against the wall wisps away from her head. "What the hell?!"

"Shit..." Billy collapses against his bed in tune with the breath in his lungs. "Sorry."

Max faces her dirty tennis shoes, sucking on her bottom lip as a million scenarios in which how her step-brother could have fucked up past through her mind. Every sweeping thought involved you somehow, and she actually kind of liked you.

"Go find her."

The ceiling stares down on him, every groove and every indent. Good thing plaster and paint don't have a conscience to judge him, despite always being the witness of Billy at his worst.

“What?” Billy’s not sure he heard right, especially when Max never meddles in his business.

A Ked nears his bed in a tentative step forward. “Go fix whatever happened.”

The lines embedded in his forehead loosen up like the curls that frame his face. All anyone ever does is automatically point the finger at him. It started with his father until even Billy started to believe that maybe he was the fuck-up his father said he’d always be.

“Prove to her that everyone in this shithole is wrong about you,” Max keeps her gaze settled on him, watching for any sort of cautionary reaction, “or whatever.”

Billy takes a deep breath. “Why should I listen to you?” he scoffs, “You’re thirteen.”

If there’s anything that Max knows about her step-brother is his loose temper. Living under the same roof as him taught her that Neil had long since snapped the leather of Billy’s leash in half, despite the older man pretending it was the fault of the dog’s breed rather than his own treatment of it.

Her legs are ready to run to her room, but her feet have found the courage to stand on the stained carpet. Max swallows some of her insecurities, “Because you’re scared.”

Besides you, Max is the only other person who can read and solve him like a simple math equation. It's the only thing you two have in common, and it's irritating as fuck.

Blue eyes snap to her for a moment as his shoulders straighten. "Hey! I'm not scared," but then his eyes trail to the bikini-chick poster taped to his closet door and the energy keeping his frustration together disintegrates. "I have to babysit you, brat. There's a difference."

"You can." A sigh leaves her chapped lips when Billy gives her a confused look. "I'll call Neil, tell him I asked you to take me to the arcade. Not a big deal."

It takes a moment before the lubrication reaches the rusty gears in his brain. He sits up and runs a hand through his locks. It's not like he's never gone behind his father's back. "Where are you actually going?"

Max shrugs, "None of your business."

The drive there is only possible due to muscle memory, an acquired reflex after driving down this familiar neighborhood so many times while all his senses have been locked on you. Complex guitar-solos screeching through the speakers, yet your sweet-as-honey voice always managing to seep through the noise. His hand reaching out to where it belongs—on the flesh of your thigh. Girly-scented shampoo invading his nostrils as your lips focused on his neck. Half-lidded eyes painting murals across the windshield, of your bedroom, ruffled sheets, and how he wanted to ravage you.

Except now, his sweaty palms cling to the steering wheel as the road ahead looks the same as the school's parking lot—smooth, with a seal-coat. His favorite metal tunes for the evening is the gasp that left your lips when you hit the ground. The scent of your shampoo is replaced by David's breath, reeking of cheap whiskey as he purposely bumped shoulders. His artistic eye tries to imagine a chance to win you back, but all he gets is hacked images of your locked front door.

The only thing that isn't different is the fact that the rules of the road only ever came second to Billy's mood. Third, after he met you.

When he'd first found out they were moving to buttfuck Indiana, he thought his life was for sure over. Or, at least the beginning of a count-down until his eighteen birthday when he'd be legally free to move back to California. When they'd finally arrived at Hawkins, it was even worse than anything his mind had conjured. It smelled like manure and the girls had nothing on Californian babes.

The town only became a little bit more tolerable once he beat his only competition, Steve Harrington, and was crowned the new king of Hawkins High. But, even then, livestock droppings still wafted in the air and the girls he had one night stands with resembled cows to the point that he was having sex with his eyes closed for the first time in his life.

That is until he bumped into you months into the fall semester.

You had been carrying one of the expensive cameras that belonged to the school, walking as you inspected the piece crafted by Greek gods themselves. In the seconds you had collided with a hard body, you

were sure you'd have to kiss goodbye your monthly allowance for the heartbreak that was just about to happen.

The camera never made impact with the linoleum. Instead, it was nestled in the palms of the new kid you had vowed to never interact with. Especially not when the stories you've heard around school said that he was just a replica in spirit of your cheating ex-boyfriend. But you had snorted out of disbelief, and the hideous sound out of your bare lips had been enough to capture Billy Hargrove's interest.

Soon, the promise of never giving another badboy the time of day was snipped with a pair of scissors as you found yourself in his passenger seat, glancing out of the window with a fresh coat of mascara on your virgin eyelashes. Him being new to the town, he had no idea where to take you for your first date together. Benny's diner had been the destination. Bless his heart.

The standard date had awkward pauses, and even more awkward jokes from Billy's end. French fries were shared and your fingers kept brushing together like a magnetic pull. You had been sure at the moment that it had to have been the attraction between the rings on his fingers and the ones on yours. It wasn't the gleam in his bedroom eyes nor the inviting scent of his cologne nor the smooth skin that was revealed by a couple of loose buttons.

When he dropped you off in front of your house, he had admitted that those corny jokes were in hopes to hear that ugly snort one more time. Offense had turned to flattery when he poked his head out the driver's side window and asked you out on another date for the following day.

You cannot believe you had fallen victim to his charm. A spell the

heartbreak over David had taught you to avoid. But, you felt worse knowing that most of the shedding tears are for the death of what was the best you had felt in months. You have had first-hand experience of learning that rollercoasters are not escalators, yet you fooled yourself anyway.

You had thought that expressing loving attention was enough to extinguish a firecracker that's ready to explode on the Fourth of July. Who knew you're arrogant enough to think that you possessed that sort of power over anyone, especially a rough-around-the-edges type of boy like Billy. A boy who clearly needs a damn therapist instead of some soft teenage girl with an ugly laugh who's capable of whispering sweet things into his awaiting ear during sex.

You don't know how long you've been under the comforter with a teddy bear clutched in your arms, staring at your reflection from the floor-mirror in the corner of your room.

Your parents are currently away for their anniversary in some tropical island, sipping on margaritas, while your brother has yet to show his face in this fortress. The telephone has been ringing on and off since Nancy Wheeler had offered you a ride home.

Riding with Nancy was the safest bet. She's nice, knows when to keep quiet, and doesn't know you enough to bombard you with questions. Unlike your best friend, who without a doubt always has your best interest in mind, but is too comfortable to give you enough space to mourn. Judilyn talks more than she listens, and you know that half those calls are from her just to tell you about how sorry Billy will be once she gets her hands on him.

You know you should be begging God to turn back time, for another

opportunity to change the outcome. You would have been paying attention to where you were going; you wouldn't have invited him into your little world with your laugh. And you definitely would have kept your arms securely crossed over your chest as the only shield you had against cupid's arrow.

But, you aren't. Because despite the shove that sent you sprawling on the cement and the scowl on his face that was so deeply rooted in hate, you're still madly in love with him. The boy who offers you his jackets when you're shivering in the howling winds of night. The boy who combs his fingers through your tresses as your naked chests rest as one. The boy who doesn't care that you don't try to hide the slight bags beneath your eyes nor any blemishes on your skin you may be battling for the week. The boy who wanted you to express your flawed laugh when, previously, David would have made fun of you for it. The boy who throughout it all, had been trying his best to show you just how beautiful you, the yearbook girl who hides behind the camera, really are.

You don't realize you'd fallen asleep until there's a couple of suspicious sounds outside your window.

The sun casts a golden hue across the sky, seeping into your second-story bedroom and stretching out the shadows of your furniture. You don't care for the picturesque beauty at the moment; all you want to do is tell Judilyn, who sometimes climbs up your window when you're ignoring her, to leave you in peace.

The comforter slides off your shoulders as your feet sink into the plush carpet. You're still in your ruined skirt and the scuffs on your

palms haven't been washed yet, but that has yet to cross your mind from your sleep-roused state.

You slide the window open with every attempt to send your best friend away. "Judy, I thought I made it clear I want to be left a—!"

His mullet shows up first before his glazed cerulean eyes. His cocky voice is nothing but a whisper: "Hey."

2. Holding Back the Fool Again

Summary for the Chapter:

This is Billy's definition of extending an olive branch.
Screwed and without shrewdness, kind of like him.

“ Hey.”

He's not sure if the breathy sigh actually left his lips or if the rustling leaves toyed with his ears. What he does know for sure is that there's a cool moisture on his upper lip, the impressive one-fifty he lifts is still no challenge to the old tree outside your window, and that even with sleep-mussed hair you've never looked better.

The rays of the sun kiss his skin, warming him up to the bone as if home is trying to plunge some needed coaxing through his thick skull. The sun knows he ran once; any discouragement will send him running again. It's the way God carved Billy's mechanics—inside the tough exterior is just a lost boy, a coward who's on the verge of finally having enough of what's been granted to him before he could even form a coherent sentence.

A reflection bounces off his Virgin Mary pendant, flashing threateningly close to your pupils. It's the universe giving him a clue that if there's ever the right time to make eye contact with the one you love, it's now. Now, in what could be the final moment he has to prove to himself that he isn't the man his father said he is and prove to you that he's not just another copy-cat of David.

Is Billy another David? When he first came to your little town, you would have said yes. When you started riding in his Camaro and showing up to social events with his arm around your waist, David hardly crossed your mind. Now? You aren't so sure, about anything.

You don't even know why you haven't slammed the window on his gorgeous face. Your best friend Judilyn would have, so what's stopping you?

Billy Hargrove has never been a perfect suitor. For heavens sake, the heroism he displayed when he saved your camera was soon followed by insulting you on your first date. And, Billy Hargrove's relationship skills sometimes make you wonder why he's even with you, or you with him. He has terrible mood swings, sometimes pushing you away so that he can have some time to himself to lift weights and not have a "woman nag at him all the time." As if he's not the one who clings onto you about seventy-percent out of a hundred.

He smokes so much that it has created a force-field around him, made up of cancerous fumes. You swear you've never inhaled as much second-hand smoke before getting to know him. The smell penetrates into your hair, your wardrobe, and soon your parents water bills were raising through the roof. After your parents started lecturing you and the scent of nicotine made a surprise appearance in your sheets, you had to lay down some strict rules: Billy can no longer smoke with the windows rolled up, Billy can no longer smoke half-an-hour before entering your house, and Billy had to promise to cut back. Not just for your sake, but his as well.

You're not an unrealistic idiot though. You've seen this addiction before with your own grandfather. You've seen the continuous cycle of grandpa crushing the cigarette box in his hands and throwing it out only for you to find fresh cigarettes littered in your grandma's rose bushes the next week. So, it's not hard to imagine Billy sparking up an extra cancer stick before he's supposed to meet with you. Especially when he comes over with an extra spritz of cologne and Binaca spearmint masking his breath.

But, as the breeze tickles your nose and wraps loosely around his dirty-blond curls in gentle tugs, you cannot detect the toxic bubble that embraces him. Nor the hours old musk of his favorite Pour Homme, but just the basic nature of the body detoxifying.

He's here, without the calming of his disgusting addiction nor the courage of a strong drink on his breath.

And his voice.

You've never heard it so...without its punch of beef-packed testosterone, without the fresh singe of tobacco on his vocal cords. So helpless. So vulnerable. So unlike Billy. But, it's been inside him all along, waiting to be pulled apart by willing hands. Hands willing to tear apart his skeleton, push past the muck of sticky blood and pulsing intestines, and cradle the most important organ of all.

And he thinks he's felt—still feels—that pleasant pain of guts being twisted and torn apart whenever you're around to mindlessly play with his fingers while you two watch a rented movie. To call out on his bullshit when anger either makes him too quiet or too loud. To wrap your arms around him when his father's had swung the hour before just because Billy had forgotten to pick up *one fucking gallon of milk*.

Earlier that day when everyone was beginning to gather around in the school's parking lot to see who'd win the fight between Billy and David, love's affliction was still harshly pulling at his heart strings. And only when you'd hit the ground was it slowly being replaced by something else—a cold numbing from a lidocaine needle.

He wants to shake off this empty, suffocating, cushionless envelop made by the devil, and repent under your plum-like palms. Repent until you stop looking at him like he's a wolf in sheep's clothing.

He's Billy, and he'll always be your Billy. But, maybe that only makes it scarier.

The telephone downstairs begins to ring again—you've since disconnected yours after just minutes of continuous phone call after the other. You turn to face your bedroom door in temptation, looking past polaroids and the photographs that Jonathan had taught you to develop in the dark room. Memories of you with Judilyn and your group of friends. Moments in time of you and Billy's blossoming relationship, featuring his douchy friends. All taped along the smooth surface.

Your fingertips get ready to push off the lower sash of the window.

"Please."

You turn your head back to Billy.

He licks his pink lips and parts them again. "Don't leave."

"Why?" You immediately flinch at the croak in your voice. This isn't how you imagined the confrontation with Billy to go. Actually, you somehow just thought you'd live in your bed forever with your teddy bear and Billy would fall off the face of the earth.

Instead, he's just outside your window with bits of bark under his fingernails and the setting sun casting a halo around his crown. The whole view is a magnificent renaissance painting; every detail crafted with expertise and purpose, such as the way pink creeps up on the clouds and how you can count every freckle on Billy's face.

Yet, you cannot find any of this to mean something. Not when classmates you barely talk to are keeping your line busy just to check up on you while *he* can't even form the words that are caught in his throat.

His eyes study the inflamed skin of your palms then cut to the smudges that trail along the side of your right thigh. Through clenched teeth, he sucks in a breath of air. "Can I come in?"

You pause for a moment, even though you hadn't expected anything else after he decided to claw his way up your window with far less grace than Judilyn's ladder method (or your ex-boyfriend's favorite: pounding his fists on your front door at two in the morning and waking up the entire house). Your finger tips weigh the odds by tapping on the painted wood, and only when you take a couple steps away from the window does Billy's glistening pecks gently deflate.

The poodle designs on your sock-clad feet are more interesting than Billy as he extends a long leg through the opening, or so you convince yourself. But you don't have to watch him to know that Billy's glancing around your neat bedroom, checking for ripped up photographs or thrown mixed tapes—any sign that tells him that you've terminated things on your end of the hemisphere.

The only thing out of place, as he's come to conclude, are the messed up sheets. The flannel is crinkled in a way that he's familiar with; he'd never tell anyone that he's had his fair share of finding comfort between blankets without a girl writhing in pleasure beneath him. Billy can almost picture you on your side with your knees tucked into your chest and your chin to your neck—he'd rather not focus on that.

You're still standing by your mirror with eyelashes hiding the prettiest pair of irises he'd come across in Hawkins.

Billy's never understood your damn patience. There was this time when Billy had walked the couple extra yards from your locker to yearbook class to pick you up for lunch, and he'd walked in on Pam Dubinsky giving you backhanded compliments on your poster designs for the new yearbook while you had stood there without saying a word. He knew about the countless hours you'd spent on your bedroom floor sketching up clever concepts while he would drift off and on on your plush mattress, and he knew all that hard work wasn't just for some jealous bitch to tell you that her's was better.

He had taken some loud steps forward and his tongue had been ready to snap away at her when you calmly raised your hand at him, prompting him from getting any closer and intervening, and kindly told the girl who had slept with your ex-boyfriend that *no one would appreciate an amateur design on their yearbooks, especially not after such a long school year* and that Pam should *think about David—mediocre head and a mediocre yearbook? Talk about heartbreak.*

It took so much of Billy to keep from laughing and humiliating that bitch any further, but above that he was proud of you for sticking up for yourself without sinking to her level. Malice disguised as a sugar cane had become his new favorite flavor.

Except, he quickly learned that your patience combined with his drastic mood swings brought him an unfamiliar peace that frustrates him just as much. He knows how to spurt out insults and give and receive bruises—that's easy; that's second-nature. But, keeping his ears from turning red and his breath under control is a whole other field. How does anyone do that?

But then you snifle, and he realizes your shoulders are trembling as your hands struggle to clasp together. You're not just waiting for him to make the first move, but you're cowering. Over the fact that Billy's so fucking reckless. Over the fact that Judilyn and your other friends were right, that Billy isn't capable of anything but serving you pain as dessert on a silver platter. Over the fact that Billy's anger can blind him of your presence, and has caused him to put his hands on you. Over the fact that just his puppy eyes alone can throw out your free will, and allow him into your bedroom. Over the fact that you're still willing to hear him out.

“ Prove to her that everyone in this shithole is wrong about you .”

Max's voice still rings clearly in his head, and he doesn't think he'll ever forget it. At least not while you shrink into yourself in front of your mirror, but he's trying to look on the bright side for once: you're blocking his crumbling tower.

His mouth is so parched that swallowing proves worthless, but he knows he has to keep pushing. The photographs on your door call back to him, and his head rolls on his shoulders towards them.

“Do you remember when your dad almost caught me hiding in your

closet?”

Your gaze on the carpet shifts a little closer to him.

A smile almost touches his lips. “You would’ve gotten in trouble if you didn’t have that Mount Everest of stuffed animals piled in there to hide me.”

The stuffed animals from your childhood had been the last thing you wanted Billy to discover about you. You had decided to donate most of them at the local Goodwill on your thirteen birthday, but your sentimental attachment to them kept you from tossing them every time. So you kept them hidden in your closet like a dirty secret, and had meant to never let the tough Billy find them. You were mortified that he’d think you were just some innocent little girl and that he wouldn’t want to be with you anymore, but he didn’t care. Sure it was a little funny, but he revealed he still had a little brown bear of his own that his mother gave him when he was six in his underwear drawer.

“Or that time when my boxers somehow got inside your hamper and your mom washed them, thinking they were your brother’s?” Billy holds in a chuckle. “And your brother was too dumb to realize they weren’t his and wore them for like a week straight.”

A sound leaves your throat. Half-giggle. Half-sob. It’s hard to differentiate whether that’s good or bad. The back of your wrist meets your nose, rubbing softly.

“There was also that one time when no one but Max and Judy knew

we had skipped town for a couple days to go see Quiet Riot in Indianapolis,” he scans a particular Polaroid snap shot that was taken at the motel pool, “All we could afford was one night in some sleazy motel room, eating greasy fast food.” He looks at you again, “It was worth it. Never thought you could make a shitty mattress comfortable.”

The corner of your chapped lips tugs up. “Your chest does makes a great pillow, Hargrove.”

The shy smile is gone sooner than it appeared.

His torso appears in front of you as his warm palms find their way to your hair. Thumbs wipe away the sticky streaks on your rosy cheeks, and then gently caresses them.

He wants you to really look at him, but he finds it a small victory when you don’t duck beneath his arms as he envelops you in a desperate hold. When you don’t pull away after he buries his face in your neck. And when you don’t push him away after you hear him suck back the gunk that’s formed in his stuffed nose nor when something wet drips onto your bare collar bones.

“I’m sorry.” His voice is muffled into your shoulder.

Billy knows that your parents have been away, and he guesses by the missing Mustang in your driveway that your older brother must be down at the run-down waterhole with a couple of pig-headed buddies, so he’d been expecting your house to be devoid of its usual mumbling and lively noises that is such an integral part of it. He’d

been relieved at first because that meant he wouldn't have to deal with your angry parents or a careless-yet-overprotective brother, but now that you are keeping quiet Billy has nothing to grasp onto except this energy that's barely hanging onto life support between you two.

Billy squeezes you a little tighter, praying that you somehow absorb his thoughts, his guilt, his regret, his love, and his fear. "Okay? I'm sorry for...being a piece of shit. I never meant for that to happen—never dreamt of it."

The saltiness settles on his taste buds. "I promise I'm not David—I'm not my *fucking father*."

Your finger nails run up his spine until they're digging into the curls on the back of his neck. "I know."

After just moments of softly scratching his scalp, you pull away and bring your arms into your ribs. The apology is left in the stale air around the two of you, but Billy doesn't blame you. Lord knows that he'd never forgive his father even if he crawled through hell and back and begged him.

Billy untangles your arms from beneath your chest and leads you into the bathroom down the hall with every intention on washing away every negative emotion down the drain, "Come on, I'm gonna take care of you."

This reluctance that stops you from letting go of the events that transpired in the parking lot is a million times better than being left to choke on the dust of drifting tires. If anything, Billy accepts this as a

start in restoring what once was. Your patience taught him that much.

As the cascading water heats up and clothes hit the tiles one by one, Billy swears to himself that the fool inside him will not be in charge of steering the outcome that involves you. And as he takes a washcloth and some Dove soap to your palms, he promises to you he'll never give you another reason to silence the ugly snort he fell in love with.